1: Blackwood E-5 (1929-1930) 1935
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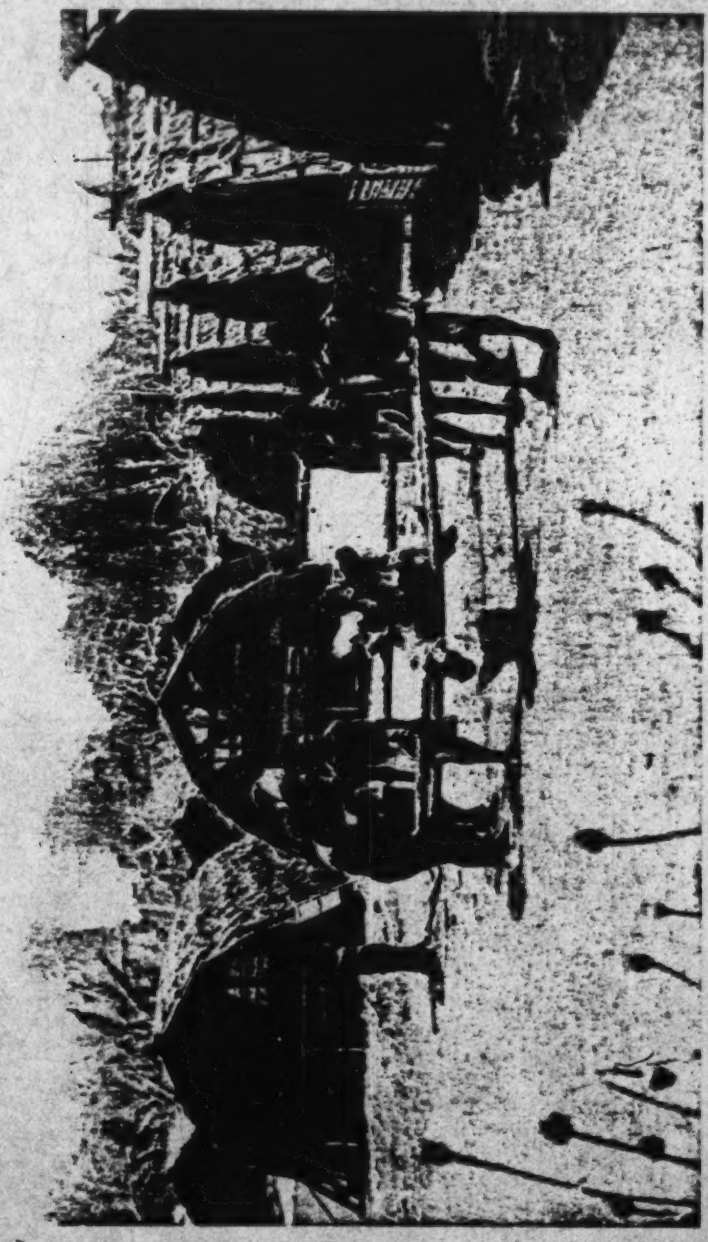

KURTATCHI VILLAGE

[facing p. iii]

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133 island. On the east side there are precipitous cliffs either dropping straight to the shore or leaving just enough space on the beach for
●[36] a row of native huts, fronting the open sea. A reef skirts this coast also, but close inshore.

131 The island of Buka is about thirty-five miles long, and eight or
133 nine wide at the widest part, narrowing very much at both ends.
137 Its most northerly point extends almost to latitude 5° S., its longitude being 154° 40′. The interior of the southern half of the island is covered with thickly forested hills, formed of dolomitic limestone, fairly steep in places but of no great height, dotted with native villages. The northern half is flat, and its interior is used by the natives principally for their gardens, the villages here being confined to the coast. There are no rivers on the east side, but on the west the coast-line is broken by several small streams and one larger river, the Gagan, formed by the junction of two streams
[134] about a couple of miles from its mouth. It is lined by mangrove swamps full of crocodiles, and provides the natives with abundance of river reeds to use for thatch in default of sago-palm which is rather scarce.

133 Bougainville is one of the largest of the Solomon Islands, about 160 miles in length with a width of 35–40 miles. This book is concerned with the inhabitants of its northern shore. At 'The Passage' the land is almost flat, but as one passes westwards there is a gradual rise, till about ten miles from the western end the cliffs have reached a height of perhaps 200 to 250 feet. They consist of dolo-
[417] mitic limestone, dropping steeply to the sea, but climbable in many places with the aid of notched logs at the steepest parts (see Pl. 2 *a*). They are covered with vegetation wherever a crack or a crevice enables the smallest amount of soil to accumulate. A coral reef comprising many species, but largely composed of a variety of Hexacorallia,[1] lines the shore. At its outer edge great breakers crash incessantly on all but a very few days in the year, making it an exciting business to launch a canoe through the surf. Owing to the difficulty of approaching it by sea, this portion of the coast
[361] offers little inducement to white settlers, and is occupied by a string of native villages, among them Kurtatchi, my head-quarters for nine months. Towards the north-eastern corner of the island

[1] For the identification of this and other geological specimens which I brought home I am indebted to Mr. C. J. Bayzand, University Demonstrator in Geology, Oxford.

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the coast is broken by three large inlets, allowing of safe anchorage for schooners, with comparatively easy access to the shore, and so affording sites for coco-nut plantations, maintained for the production of copra, which, except for a little fishing for trochus shell, is the only possibility the country offers to white men. Between and behind these plantations are more native villages. The hinterland soon breaks into foot-hills, and behind these rises range after range of heavily forested mountains, a difficult region, much of which has not yet been explored. The interior is volcanic, culminating, as far as the northern half of the island is concerned, in the active volcano Balbi (9,500 ft.), an object of mysterious dread to the natives, who place there the home of their dead.

The peninsula at the north-western end of the island, the scene of many of the activities described in the following pages, slopes gently down from the cliffs on its northern shore, to a flat sandy beach bordering the bay which forms its southern boundary, some five miles distant (Pl. I *b*). The interior of this peninsula is covered with what I take to be secondary forest; the whole of it has probably been cleared at one time or another by the natives for their taro gardens, the positions of which they must change frequently.

A cleared track, known as 'the Government road', runs round the greater part of the coast of Buka, and, in places, when sufficiently dry, is possible for wheeled vehicles, enabling the planters to run a lorry for the collection of copra. There is a similar road along the north coast of Bougainville and down the east coast for some ninety miles, as far as Kieta, the place of residence of the District Officer and the only settlement other than isolated plantations on the island. This road is, in dry weather, also practicable for wheeled traffic for rather more than ten miles to the east of Buka Passage, but after that it encounters the Umu Mountains, which, though not high, are steep, and thenceforward a succession of rivers (innocent of bridges) and hilly patches make it improbable that the road will be available for any but pedestrians for a long time to come. It affords pleasant walking, and is much used by the natives in their numerous comings and goings, to visit relatives, to exchange commodities, or merely for fun. The people of each village are held responsible for keeping in traversable condition the stretch of road for a certain distance on either side of their village. They are supposed to work on it one day a week. The women do most of the work.

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example, I found that the Petats people were familiar with all the small islands along the reef, and with the villages on the west coast of Buka, from Lontis in the north to Novar on the south, with all of which their genealogies showed that they had intermarried. They also associated with certain, but not all, of the villages of Central Buka, such as Sapani and Kohiso, and with Malasang on the east coast, whither they went to trade for pots. They were much less at home with the people of the north and east, whose affinities are mostly with the Bougainville coast. The difference came out in the demeanour of my companions on a tramp round the island during which we stayed at most of the principal villages.

The people of Kurtatchi have friendly contact with all the villages along the north coast of Bougainville, those of Tabut, Timputs, and Baniu, which speak the same dialect, being their closest affiliations. They are distrustful of the Hahon people living in the villages of the foot-hills behind the coast-line, though they do, on occasion, trade with them and attend their ceremonies. Several of the people of Kurtatchi originally belonged to Hanahan, on the east coast of Buka, and there are also kinship affiliations with Malasang. Little contact takes place between Kurtatchi and the villages on the west side of Buka, not only because of the difference of dialect, but also because the sea journey involved, by Buka Passage and up the coast, is much longer and apt to be difficult.

THE VILLAGE

Though very far from being a closed society, as will be evident from the preceding paragraph, the village yet forms a definite local group, possessing a certain amount of conscious unity. Where an American Indian will give you the name of his tribe, a Buka or Bougainville native tells you the name of his village. The inhabitants of, say, Baniu or Timputs will be spoken of by the people of Kurtatchi as 'the Baniu' or 'the Timputs'—I have often been told that 'the Baniu' would attend a certain ceremony, or 'the Timputs' would do this or that. In introducing to me a stranger who happened to be visiting Kurtatchi, the name of his village would always be mentioned before anything else, that being clearly considered the important thing in the matter of his identification.

Sites of villages. There is a succession of villages all round the coast of Buka, at intervals varying from a few hundred yards to

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361 several miles, sometimes with intervening plantations. In the interior there are a number scattered over the hilly ground in the southern half of the island, in such places as were found suitable for clearing. A similar string of villages extends along the north coast of Bougainville, broken, on the eastern half, by the plantations of Baniu, Raua, and Timputs.

The site chosen is either on the shore, if there is any land flat enough between the cliffs and the beach, or on the cliff, close to its edge. The government road runs parallel to the coast at a short distance away from it, and the villages are all between the road and the sea. A few yards of bush are left uncut on the landward side, so that the village cannot, as a rule, be seen from the road. On the other side of the road there are usually no huts at all.

226 361 One, if not the main, reason for placing the village close to the sea is in order to discover as early as possible the presence of a shoal of bonito in the neighbourhood. A look-out place is kept clear of bushes at the most commanding part of the cliff, and when the sea-birds that always accompany the bonito are seen, a special cry is raised, which sends every available man hurrying to launch a canoe and pursue them before they move too far away. If the nature of the ground permits, a favourite arrangement is to have one or more hamlets on the shore and others on the cliff immediately above it. The village of Ruri, for example, is made up of five hamlets, Biakwawin, Merimer, and Sikov, on the shore; Siara and Tagun on the cliff-top. At Tabut there are four, Muna-awel, Tensoa, Sumnɛ̃, and Buŋgus; all on the shore, the cliff above being unsuitable for building. At Kurtatchi there is not enough level ground between the foot of the cliff and the beach to admit of the building of huts, so the whole village is on the top. The originally separate hamlet of Gomen is now amalgamated with Kurtatchi.

361 166 The sites of villages are apt to be changed, for a number of reasons. This does not disturb the feeling of solidarity, for the village or hamlet moves *en masse*, and is reconstructed on the new site much as it was before. The vicissitudes of the hamlet with which I was most closely associated will serve to illustrate this practice. It once stood on the sea-shore, at a place called Ur, a [731] little to the west of its present site. An extra high tide, or possibly a tidal wave (the description given by the natives is not clear on this point), washed some of the huts away. It was then removed to

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the top of the cliff, just above the old site; the bit of ground being previously known as Tchundawan, that became the name of the village. After a time the prospect of an abundant supply of coconuts led to another move, to the island of Torrikorri, in the middle of Soraken Bay, across the peninsula. Tiring of making a canoe journey whenever they wished to visit the mainland, the people soon left the island, and set up their huts at Tarongen, on the southern shore of the peninsula, where they still have a fishing hamlet. Because of a dispute with their neighbours, they returned to the north coast, and settled at Gomen, a little to the east of their old site of Tchundawan, where some of them appear to have remained meanwhile. When they had been at Gomen for some time, it happened that three people of importance died within a short period. The agitated survivors attributed this disaster to the fact that some one was making 'poison' against them, and decided to leave the fated spot and to amalgamate with the neighbouring hamlet of Kurtatchi, some half-mile to the west. This sixth move was in progress when I joined the community. How long the six changes had taken altogether it was impossible to ascertain. When the last Government Census was taken, in 1926, some of the families I knew at Kurtatchi were living at Tarongen and some at Tchundawan.

As a result of this practice, the country is dotted with old village sites, often with a ruined hut or two still standing. Under such circumstances, it will be obvious that the occurrence of a number of deserted villages does not necessarily imply a rapidly dwindling population. There would be even more of them than there are, were it not for the fact that ground unoccupied and untended soon becomes overgrown with vegetation, and in a remarkably short time has 'gone back bush', till it is hardly possible to recognize that it ever was the site of a village (Pl. 5 *a*).

Plan of villages. The general plan of the coast villages of Buka and the North Bougainville coast is always the same—the huts are arranged in straight lines facing a clear space which is used for dances. A small hamlet will have only one line of huts, the usual arrangement is to have two lines, probably facing each other with the open space between them. Often two or three such hamlets, perhaps a quarter of a mile or more apart, will make up the village. A large village may spread itself out in one long line, as in the populous villages on the Lontis coast, or some huts may be

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set up outside the line, as at Petats; this is usually a sign of a village which has come under the influence of the white man. The villages are now increasing in size, as the natives are encouraged by the Government to live in larger groups for greater ease of supervision. Probably originally all the hamlets were much smaller than most of them now are, and consisted only of relatives. This still holds good to some extent, but the rule is not invariable, and a family may move out of one hamlet into another. The system of segregation is carried out most rigorously in the mountain districts of central Bougainville, where a few huts, or even a solitary one, will be set in a small clearing on a hill-top, hidden from sight by the thick bush closing in upon it on all sides.

The front of the line of huts is always carefully set in a line, measured by means of a length of fibre, but as they are of different sizes to suit their occupants, the back of the row is irregular. The width is always approximately the same (about 12 ft.). The huts are always set very close together, sometimes not more than a foot or two separating them. This space is sometimes utilized for growing crotons or other plants valued for their colours or for their properties as 'medicine'.

There is no prescribed orientation for the lines of huts. They sometimes run parallel to the coast-line, sometimes at right angles to it. At Kurtatchi the original two lines of huts are in the former position, but the huts that were moved from Gomen were placed parallel to the cliff-edge, i.e. at right angles to the other lines (see plan, p. 586). Since the line of beds is always at right angles to the long axis of the hut, it follows that there is not, as is sometimes the case among primitive people, either a prescribed or a forbidden orientation for sleeping.

In most villages there will be one or two huts situated apart from the rest, occupied by people who do not care to mix too much with the others. At Petats there was the primitive shed belonging to the old man Hangunasi (now dead), who did not like the way the Petats people are adopting the customs taught them by the mission. At Kurtatchi, one man, Ora, had placed his hut right away from the village, which he seldom visited and discouraged his family from frequenting. The villagers told me it was because he did not like to live with other people; they considered it very odd, and when I showed them the plan I had drawn of the village, with Ora's hut away at the edge of the paper, it always caused

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PLATE 3

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a. VIEW FROM CLIFFS AT KURTATCHI

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b. NEW-STYLE HOUSES, BUKA

[Facing p. 20]

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much laughter. He was quite courteous to me when I visited him, but difficult to engage in conversation, and very chary of his words.

Every hamlet contains one or more huts set apart for the exclusive use of the men and boys (*tobár*). In the Bougainville villages these must be used by the boys wearing the *upi* (headgear indicating that they have not finished their puberty ceremonies, see Ch. VI), who are prohibited from entering any hut occupied by a woman. In Buka, where the boys do not wear the *upi*, their segregation is less rigid, but they may sleep in the 'men's house' if they wish. In both districts unattached men usually sleep there, and male guests from other villages are accommodated there if their visit extends overnight. The men say that this is a good idea because it prevents the visitors from meddling with the village women. These huts do not differ in any respect from the others (see Pl. 30 *b*). They vary in size according to the number of people likely to use them. There seems to be no fixed situation assigned to them in relation to the other huts of the village. In some hamlets they stand in line with the others, in some they are off to one side a little. In other places they occupy part of the ground in front of the line, if this can be arranged without encroaching too much upon the space needed for dancing. Any hut occupied by a man living alone, e.g. an old widower, may be used to house some of the boys if occasion requires. Where the *tobār* is in the middle of the village, it serves as a gathering-place for the men in their idle moments. Where it stands apart, the men tend to congregate in the front portion of the hut belonging to the *tunuun* (chief), which has a kind of porch attached to it.

Most villages are fenced except where they face the shore. In the beach villages the fence is made of stones and chunks of coral rock, in the cliff villages of saplings put in green and left to grow. It does not seem to be a survival of an old stockade, but a recent innovation, erected at the instance of the Government with the idea of keeping the pigs away from the dwellings, but as it is always full of gaps, either due to neglect or left intentionally to facilitate entrance and exit, in most cases it fails to function. On the outskirts are planted banana, bread-fruit, and other useful trees. Coco-nuts are not liked in close proximity to the huts, as the heavy nuts are apt to do damage in falling. At some place convenient for launching, there will be one or more sheds for

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PLATE 5

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a. DESERTED VILLAGE OF GOMEN

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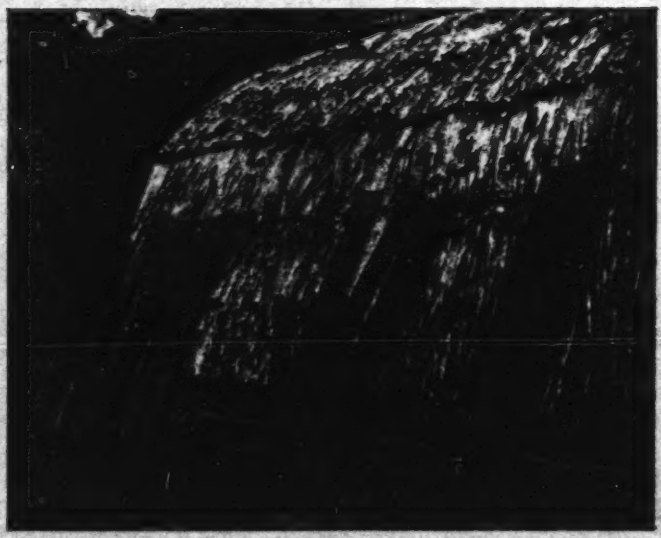

b. AIRING THE BEDS

[facing p.23]

1: Blackwood E-5 (1929-1930) 1935
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361 The plan of the village of Kurtatchi, with details (given in Appendix I) concerning the huts of one portion of it, will serve as a concrete illustration of many points bearing on the organization of village life. The huts described formerly belonged to the hamlet of Gomen; they were being transferred to join those already standing at Kurtatchi at the time when I took up my residence in the village.

ANALYSIS OF POPULATION OF KURTATCHI VILLAGE IN 1930[1]

621 During the nine months I lived at Kurtatchi (January to September 1930), the resident population of that village was made up as 162 follows:

Males.		*Females.*	
Widowers (1 young)	7	Widows (3 of child-bearing age)	12
Married adults	24	Married adults	35
Adolescent boys (wearing the *upi*)	25	Adolescent girls	7
Children	14	Children	12
Total	70	Total	66

Total number of both sexes and all ages, 136.

162 Apart from temporary variations, occasioned by the payment of visits and the hospitality offered to guests from other villages, 163 which are of constant occurrence, the changes taking place in the 165 population during my stay were as follows. There were two births, 574 but neither of these added to the total, since one of the babies died two days after birth, the other belonged to a woman who came from her husband's village to be confined in her mother's hut; she took the baby home in a few weeks. There was one miscarriage. One woman was known to be pregnant at the time of my departure. One marriage took place, the bride coming to live in her husband's village. There were five deaths, one old man, two middle-aged men, one child about four, and the new-born child above mentioned.

167 Two men were away working as indentured labourers. Both 881 returned to live in the village before I left it. Proportionately fewer 784 people were away from this village than usual, because a taboo prevented the adolescent boys and the young men who were their sponsors from signing on as indentured labourers until after the 464 performance of the *wataswut∫* ceremony, an important part of the boys' puberty rites. They were permitted to work on local

[1] I am here concerned not with demographic problems but only with the village as it was when this study was made.

1: Blackwood E-5 (1929-1930) 1935
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PLATE 17

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WOMEN'S DANCE FOR WANIAS

[facing p. 192]

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484 The people of Hanahan go to Green Island to get *beroan* (shell currency) and fish, because the fishing at Hanahan is not good. They also
439 buy pigs, because the pigs of Green Island are bigger than the pigs at Hanahan. The people of Green Island are the same people as those of
197 Hanahan, and talk the same language, but the people of Green Island talk very slowly, it sounds as if they were sad and wanted to cry. (Here the speaker gave an imitation, in a high-pitched voice with a whining tone and a drop at the end of every sentence.) They pay for the *beroan* and the pigs and the fish with taro, pots, and paint, which they get from Tiop.

484 They stop two days, and fish; there are plenty of fish at Green Island.
[789] When the men are ready to come back, a man of Green Island takes hold of the canoe and says some words to make the canoe run quickly and come back to Hanahan. The people of Green Island know these words, the Hanahan people do not know them. They leave at dusk, and come back to Hanahan in the early morning. They do not take so long as they did to go to Green Island, because the sea pushes the canoe.

502 Here the narrator ceased, but further inquiry elicited the information that they steer by the same stars, watching till they are high enough in the sky to be seen in front of the canoe. When they get near home they look for the point called Hanapan (the most northerly headland on Buka) and for the highest mountain on Buka, which they call Langono (I am not sure just where this is). When they get closer to the shore they must steer away from the island or else they would be carried round the northern edge of the island on to the Lontis coast. They beach the canoe at sunrise.

House-building

361 From the plan and description of the village given in Chapter I, it will be seen that the huts (*inu*) are always set up in lines. When a new one is to be added to the line, the position of the front is determined by stretching a piece of creeper or fibre string along the line of the houses already in position, and continuing it farther to the site of the new one. The backs of the huts are not alined, as some are much longer than others, owing to the fact that increase in size is always obtained by adding to the length at the back, the width remaining practically constant in all.

342 The first procedure in house-building is to put in pieces of stick to mark the corners, using the string as above described. Along the sides, uprights (*kurik*) are set up in double rows, just wide enough apart for the insertion between them of the slats which they are

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APPENDIX I

Description of part of plan of Kurtatchi

1. 'Long house' belonging to the *tsunaun*, Pinari, with its 'eye' (roofed porch open in front, used as a meeting-place for the men). In the house itself live:
   Gomar, now Pinari's chief wife (his first wife being dead).
   Ira, her daughter, married but not living with her husband.
   Rudi, infant still suckling, son of Gomar and Pinari.
   Busa, about 6, son of Pinari by a wife now dead
   Kela, about 5, son of another dead wife of Pinari by her former husband.
   Sang, wife of Pinari recently taken over from his dead brother.
   Komul, another wife of Pinari, whose hut has not yet been brought over from Gomen.
2. Kwimau, wife of Pinari.
   Davril, aged about 6–7, and Togomen (suckling), her sons.
   Pinari divides his time between this hut and No. 1.
3. Pari, Pinari's widowed sister.
   Rus, young widow, daughter of Matēv.
   Wanias, about 4, Rus's son.
4. Matēv, widow, Pinari's 'sister' (actually his mother's sister's daughter).
   Kakari, her son, aged about 19–20.
   Waror, her daughter, aged about 7–8.
   Muben, Kakari's wife, aged 14–15.
   Before Kakari's marriage, Rus and Wanias lived here. When Kakari brought home his bride, they moved to No. 3. After the young couple had lived here for about six months, Matēv told him he ought to build a hut for himself in the space to the left, but he had not made any attempt to do so when I left three months later.
5. Space intended for hut belonging to Komul, not yet brought over from Gomen. Komul meanwhile sleeps in No. 1.
6. Sobak, an elderly man.
   Tsonaketa, his wife.
   Bawt, her sister, widow of a man of Hanahan, who came here to be near Tsonaketa.
   Kabo, Omi, and Mēbi, Bawt's three sons. Kabo is of an age to wear the *api*, but as this custom is not practised at Hanahan he has

[text continues on p. 585]

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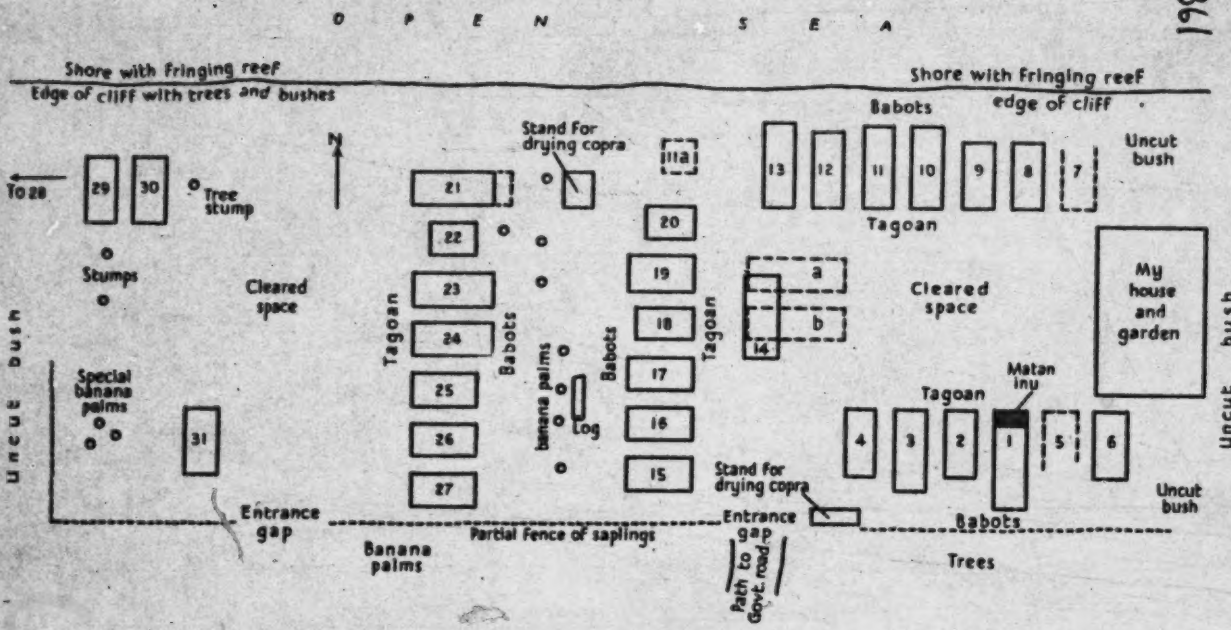

PLAN OF KURTATCHI VILLAGE IN 1930

1: Blackwood E-5 (1929-1930) 1935
ON6 Buka ON6
Kurtatchi

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never put it on, and can therefore enter this hut if he wishes. He usually sleeps in the *tobar* with the other boys of his age. Omi and Mēbi are younger.

7. Space for hut belonging to Wasē, Pinari's son, not yet moved from Gomen. He and his family are at present living in No. 8.

8. Matarē, man belonging to Timputs, husband of
Marotē, Pinari's daughter by his first wife.
Hut at present shared with
Wasē, Marotē's brother, his two wives Takon and Tahol, and Tahol's son, Nomoin (suckling). (Takon has not reached puberty.)

9. Togen, brother of Matarē, husband of
Pesē, sister of Marotē.
Their daughter Gaua, aged about 5–6, and their son Gav (suckling).
Kikis, girl of about 9, whose parents are dead. Related to Pesē's mother. (Spends some of her time with her mother's people at Ieta.)
Hut at present shared with
Tchiriv, a protégé of Pinari's, and Tarubi his wife, who came from Ruri. At Gomen they lived with Komul. They were considering building a hut for themselves when I left Kurtatchi.

10. Wakos, widow of Krapen (son of Pasu and Pasis).
Bunakets, mother of Wakos, a very old woman.
Three daughters of Wakos, Laia, in her teens, married to a man away at work; Bios, aged 5–6, No, aged about 2.

11. Pasu, sister of Wanawatch, widow of Pasis, Pinari's mother's brother.
Gerigir, her son, and Kalo his wife (when she can be persuaded to stay here; often she goes back to her mother in another village).
Tapē, daughter of Pasu, married to a man away at work.
Tchub, recently become a widower, son of Pasu. (Often sleeps in the *tobar*, and began a hut (11a) for himself shortly before I left, in which to set up a new household.) Has one young son, living with his dead wife's sister at Ruri.

12. Kio, wife of Wanawatch.
Puta, her daughter by a former husband.
Nok, aged 3–4, daughter of Kio and Wanawatch (died during my stay).
Pirier, husband of Puta.
Walala, daughter of Puta and Pirier (suckling).
Wawata, first wife of Wanawatch, now blind.

13. Wanawatch (generally, occasionally at 12). Belongs to Baniu, came here to be near his sister Pasu.

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ON6 Buka ON6
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361 Tai'en, wife of Wanawatch, Gugum, their daughter (suckling).
Boles, about 5, daughter of Wanawatch and Wawaus.

592 14. Maravin, an old man living alone (he divorced his wife, who has since died). Some of the boys wearing the *upi* shared this hut till Maravin died, after which it was taken down to make room for the two *tobar* belonging to Gomen, which were erected shortly before I left, as shown by the dotted lines on the plan (a, b).

Huts 15–27 belong to the original village of Kurtatchi. Reference to people living in some of these has been made in other chapters of this book.

No. 28 is situated about a quarter of a mile away; it belongs to Ora (brother of Sobak), an old man who does not like to be with other people; with him live Tsonatchil, his wife, Towats, their daughter, widow of Boie, brother of Pinari, her two little children, and Diriwi, the daughter of Maravin, married to Gasagar (son of Ora and Tsonatchil), who still wears the *upi*. It is very seldom that any of these people are seen in the village, though they take part in community enterprises such as journeys for purposes of barter, &c.

Nos. 29, 30, and 31 are *tobar*, or men's houses, 29 belongs to the Nakarib boys, 30 and 31 to those of the clan Naboin. Pending the reconstruction of the two *tobar* (one for each clan) originally belonging to Gomen, those of the boys who did not sleep in No. 14 were distributed in these three, making them very crowded.

1: Blackwood E-5 (1929-1930) 1935
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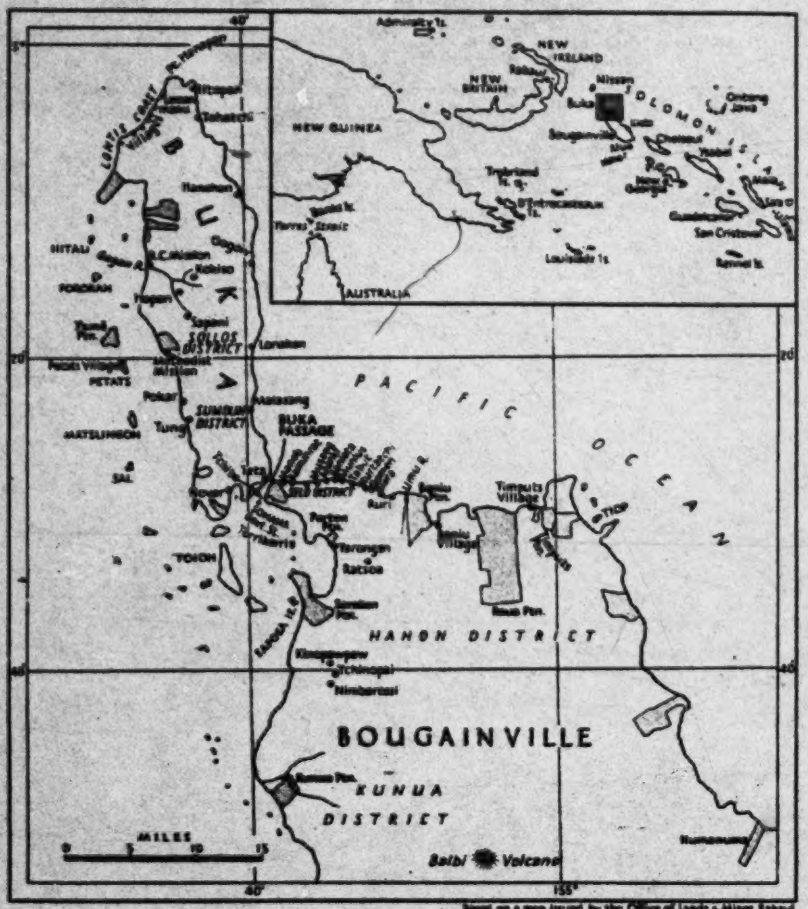
NEW IRELAND
NEW BRITAIN
NEW GUINEA
SOLOMON ISLANDS
AUSTRALIA
Buka
Bougainville
Choiseul
Santa Isabel
San Cristoval
Rennell I.
Louisiade Is.
Admiralty Is.
Nissan
Ontong Java
Tasman Is.
Coral Sea Is.
Guadalcanal
Malaita
Russell Is.
Florida Is.
Shortland Is.
Treasury Is.
Trobriand Is.
D'Entrecasteaux Is.
Woodlark I.
Fergusson I.
Normanby I.
Rossel I.
Misima I.
Tagula I.
Kieta
Tonolei Harbour
Loloru
Kokopo
Rabaul
Kavieng
Namatanai
Kavieng
Lorengau
Manus I.
Hermit Is.
Ninigo Is.
Kaniet Is.
Mussau I.
Emirau I.
Feni Is.
Tabar Is.
Lihir Is.
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Anir Is.
Nissan I.
Carteret Is.
Mortlock Is.
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Nukumanu Is.
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Tonolei Harbour
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